

THOMAS LAWLESS: A PUBLICAN AT WAIORONGOMAI AND ELSEWHERE

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Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers

No. 143

2016

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ISSN: 2463-6266

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

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Abstract: *An Irishman whose father and mother were publicans, Thomas Lawless was one also for most of his life. After settling at Thames in 1867, he mined there for some years before moving to Coromandel, where he ran several hotels. Returning to Thames, he was a tobacconist for several years before settling at Waiorongomai and running a large new hotel there. With the fading of the goldfield, his financial struggles resulted in bankruptcy and having to sell his hotel. To survive, he had to take on other jobs before returning to Thames in 1887 to run an aerated water factory as well as some hotels. When living in Paeroa from 1891 until 1899 he was an ironmonger, but after settling in Waihi became a publican again, actively assisted by his wife. Subsequently he ran hotels in Taranaki and Whanganui. During most of these years he invested in mines and mining companies on many Hauraki goldfields.*

Lawless was prominent everywhere he settled, being actively involved in social, musical, sporting, and church activities along with various efforts to assist these communities. He was a notable cricketer, and in Thames was a Volunteer. His wives were also involved in social activities and the Catholic Church. His family life seems to have been a happy one, apart from the death of his first wife in a tragic accident.

Lawless was a man for whom almost nobody had a harsh word, apart from his defense of the Catholic Church in an argument over religious education in public schools.

A FAMILY OF PUBLICANS

Thomas Lawless,¹ commonly known as Tommy,² was born in 1853 to James, a colour sergeant, and Ellen Halligan (recorded in New Zealand as both Lonergan and Lonnergan).³ Ellen, married at 17, had been born in

¹ For his photograph, see *Ohinemuri County Jubilee 1885-1945* (Paeroa, 1945), p. 100; *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 April 1901, Supplement, p. 6; for cartoon of him and his second wife, see *Observer*, 27 April 1901, p. 12.

² For example, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 May 1895, p. 38.

³ Death Certificate of Thomas Lawless, 26 April 1912, 1912/4012; Birth Certificate of Charles Edward Lawless, 30 September 1884, 1884/6199, BDM; ancestry.co.uk.

Ireland to Thomas, a blacksmith; her mother was another Ellen.⁴ According to Lawless' death certificate, he was born in Bradford, but as there is no record of this it is much more likely that an obituary giving his country of birth as Ireland was correct.⁵ He had a strong Irish accent.⁶ The family settled in New Zealand either in 1860 or 1862.⁷ His father took up a land grant of 80 acres in July 1864,⁸ but did not settle on it. Instead, he was granted a publican's license for the Newton Hotel in Karangahape Road, in the inner Auckland suburb of Newton, but died a year later of apoplexy, aged only 43.⁹ He left Thomas, his only son, 106 acres of land at Omaru, between modern day Dargaville and Waipu,¹⁰ and an allotment in the Helensville - Riverhead area, respectively worth £55 and £18 in 1882 and £100 and £70 three years later.¹¹

His widow immediately took over the hotel license; in October 1871 it was noted that she had run it for nine years.¹² With Thomas, she moved to Coromandel in 1872, becoming licensee of the Bridge Hotel at Kapanga,¹³ behind Coromandel township. In November, Ellen, her youngest daughter, aged 8, died from diphtheria.¹⁴ No other daughters have been traced, and

⁴ Death Certificate of Ellen Lawless, 14 November 1894, 1894/4508, BDM.

⁵ Death Certificate of Thomas Lawless, 26 April 1912, 1912/4012, BDM; ancestry.co.uk; *Stratford Evening Post*, 26 April 1912, p. 5.

⁶ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 5 September 1885, p. 4.

⁷ Death Certificates of Ellen Lawless, 14 November 1894, 1894/4508; Thomas Lawless, 26 April 1912, 1912/4012, BDM.

⁸ Immigrant Land Grants, Naval and Military Settlers' Land Orders, no. 347, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 4115/1c, ANZ-A.

⁹ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 26 July 1865, p. 164, 14 July 1866, p. 202; Death Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1866, p. 3; Death Certificate of James Lawless, 26 June 1866, 1866/4144, BDM.

¹⁰ For location of the Omaru River, see *Reed New Zealand Atlas* (Auckland, 2004), map 7, D 4.

¹¹ *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand ...* (Wellington, 1884), p. L 11; *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 7.

¹² *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 13 July 1867, p. 303, 12 August 1870, p. 328; *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 November 1868, p. 3, 21 October 1871, p. 18.

¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 2 May 1885, p. 7; *Coromandel Mail*, 21 May 1874, Supplement, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 October 1872, p. 2, 6 November 1872, p. 2; Death Certificate of Ellen Lawless, 4 November 1872, 1872/11035, BDM.

none were recorded when she died in 1894.¹⁵ In 1874, she returned to Auckland and obtained the license for the Edinburgh Castle Hotel, retaining this until early 1881.¹⁶

From then until her death, Ellen lived where her son lived, in 1883 being the sponsor of a grandson, Daniel Frederick Lawless, when he was baptized in Thames.¹⁷ After Thomas moved to Waiorongomai, in April 1885 she took over Park House, a 20-roomed boarding house in the main street of Te Aroha, opposite the domain.¹⁸ She left the district in April 1888, selling her household furniture and effects,¹⁹ and died at Paeroa in November 1894, of ‘general debility from old age’, although aged only 69. Thomas, with whom she had been living, signed her death certificate.²⁰

AT THAMES IN THE LATE 1860s

Lawless went to Thames shortly after the initial rush, obtaining his miner’s right on 16 October 1867,²¹ and worked as a miner for some years. The following March, he asked for ten days protection of Madman’s Gully No. 3 ‘on account of his mother’s illness’.²² In June he was registered as one of the seven owners of this claim, each having one share, selling half his interest in the following month for £125 and the other half in the following

¹⁵ Death Certificate of Ellen Lawless, 14 November 1894, 1894/4508, BDM.

¹⁶ Advertisement, *Coromandel News*, 27 August 1874, p. 1; *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 5 September 1876, p. 347; Licensing Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1881, p. 9.

¹⁷ Thames Catholic Church, Baptism Register 1874-1896, entry for 30 March 1883, Catholic Archives, Auckland [his birth was not registered].

¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 2, advertisement, 23 May 1885, p. 7, 18 December 1886, p. 2, 7 April 1888, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 9 March 1886, p. 3; Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 222, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A; Te Aroha Town Board, Rate Book 1888 [no pagination], Sections 5, 12, Block 1, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1888, p. 2.

²⁰ Death Certificate of Ellen Lawless, 14 November 1894, 1894/4508, BDM.

²¹ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Miners’ Rights 1867-1868, no. 1130, BACL 14358/1a, ANZ-A.

²² Thames Warden’s Court, Registrations 1868, no. 291, BACL 14358/1a, ANZ-A.

January.²³ In September 1869, when living at Grahamstown, he held shares in the Sierra Nevada Company, which mined at Otanui, at the head of Hape Creek.²⁴ In June 1874, he was warned that his four shares in the Otago Company would be forfeited if a call remained unpaid.²⁵

AT COROMANDEL

By at least 1872, Lawless was living at Coromandel. In November that year he applied for a publican's license for his premises on the Jackson Bay side of the Tokatea Saddle, supported by six residents certifying that he was 'a person of good fame and reputation and fit and proper to be licensed to keep an Inn or Public House'.²⁶ The local magistrate recommended that his application be approved. 'The applicant is at present managing a very respectable Hotel [the Bridge Hotel] in this place, licensed in his mother's name'.²⁷ The license was granted.²⁸ In May 1873, he applied for a residence site on the Pukewhau road 'about half mile from Emily Battery'.²⁹ In August, he held the license for the Wharf Hotel, and in October was granted one for the Saddle Hotel, at Kapanga.³⁰

In August 1873, he chaired the meeting held at the Bridge Hotel that formed the Mystery claim, at Tiki, a short distance south of Coromandel

²³ Thames Warden's Court, Claims Register May-June 1868, folio 181, BACL 14397/1a; Register of Agreements 1868, folio 169, BACL 14417/2a, ANZ-A.

²⁴ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 17 September 1869, p. 1072.

²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 June 1874, p. 2.

²⁶ Thomas Lawless to Superintendent, 27 November 1872; memorial by Hugh Macdonald and five others, 29 November 1872, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 4157/72, ANZ-A.

²⁷ Jackson Keddell (Coromandel Magistrate) to Superintendent, 7 December 1872, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 4157/72, ANZ-A.

²⁸ Memorandum of 9 December 1872, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 4157/72, ANZ-A.

²⁹ Coromandel Warden's Court, Applications for Sites 1870-1890, 7/1873, ZAAP 15150/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁰ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 11 October 1873, p. 218; Thames Electoral Roll, August 1873-September 1874, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8183, 3015/73, ANZ-A.

township, into a company, in which he held shares.³¹ This was his only investment in Coromandel mining. He must have expected Tiki to boom, for he acquired a residence site there in January 1874;³² as it did not, he and his mother returned to Auckland. In May that year, his household qualification to be on the electoral roll through having the Wharf Hotel was challenged because he had left the district.³³

Lawless had been prominent in the community. In October 1872 he was on the committee organizing a race meeting.³⁴ He competed in the Coromandel Sports held to celebrate the 1873 new year.³⁵ He was secretary of the cricket club.³⁶ Although living in Auckland in December 1874, he retained an interest in the district, collecting money for the widow of a Coromandel man.³⁷

AT THAMES ONCE MORE

From 1877 to 1881 Lawless was a tobacconist at Thames.³⁸ According to an auctioneer, his freehold shop was 'the finest business premises' there.³⁹ Being a tobacconist had its financial hazards, as illustrated in 1881 when he sued a man who had given him a valueless cheque for £2 19s:

On the 28th of March the accused came to his place, and asked for a packet of cigarettes. He made some remark that he had not been here for five years. The last occasion when he came was as a member of a cricketing team from Taranaki. He paid for the cigarettes, and then said he had been on the booze in Auckland, and being on the wharf saw the Rotomahana leaving for the Thames, and stepped on board. He was now without money, and

³¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 August 1873, p. 16; *New Zealand Gazette*, 25 September 1873, p. 552.

³² Coromandel Warden's Court, Register of Machine, Business, and Residence Sites 1872-1892, folio 29, ZAAAN 1166/1a, ANZ-A.

³³ *Coromandel Mail*, 21 May 1874, Supplement, p. 3.

³⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 October 1872, p. 3.

³⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 January 1873, p. 10.

³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 March 1874, p. 3.

³⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 December 1874, p. 4.

³⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 18 October 1877, p. 1035; *Thames Electoral Rolls*, 1879, p. 44, 1880, p. 24; advertisement, *Thames Star*, 13 January 1880, p. 4.

³⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 March 1881, p. 2.

asked witness if he would cash a cheque. He asked for a blank cheque on the Bank of New Zealand, but witness replied he had none on that bank, but gave him one on the New South Wales Bank. Accused filled up the cheque for the sum of three pounds, and altered the name Grahamstown to that of Auckland, afterwards signing it with his own name. The cheque was presented by witness to the Bank of New Zealand, Grahamstown, and three pounds less exchange given for it. The cheque was returned in a day or so from the accountant at the Bank, with a notice that there was no account of such a name in the bank at Auckland. Repaid the bank £3. Saw the accused after the cheque was returned by the bank, and asked him if he had any money upon him, if so he had better give up three pounds for the cheque, as the bank had returned it as valueless. He then said it should have been upon the Colonial Bank of New Zealand. Accused then wrote the word Colonial over the word bank, upon the face of the cheque. Had tried to get the cheque cashed by the Colonial Bank, but had not succeeded.

By the accused – Remembered you afterwards, but at first thought you were another individual.

By the Bench – I cashed the cheque because I thought it was good, and he the individual I thought he was.

After evidence was given that the accused had no account in either bank, he was sentenced to two months with hard labour.⁴⁰

In February 1881, Lawless advertised a special sale: ‘On the point of clearing out! Sale of Meerscham & Briar Pipes, Pouches, Purses &c, at cost price for a few days. Everything will be sacrificed to reduce the stock’.⁴¹ He also sold his allotment and shop in Brown Street for £400.⁴² He had sold his business because he had taken over the Empire Hotel:⁴³

MR THOMAS LAWLESS, mine host of the Empire Hotel, informs the public through our advertising columns that he has just completed the renovating of his commodious establishment, and that it is now one of the best licensed houses on the ground where accommodation can be obtained. In addition to being agent on the Thames for Abbott’s and Gillett’s Consultations on the Dunedin Cup, Mr Lawless has on his own account started one on the Melbourne Cup for £1000. During the past few years a

⁴⁰ Magistrate’s Court, *Thames Star*, 2 April 1881, p. 2.

⁴¹ Advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 February 1881, p. 2.

⁴² *Thames Advertiser*, 24 March 1881, p. 2.

⁴³ *Thames Star*, 11 January 1881, p. 2, 19 January 1881, p. 2; Licensing Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 March 1881, p. 3.

considerable sum of money has been sent away from here to Auckland and elsewhere for investment in this line of business, but the prizes gained by speculators have not been so very numerous. Mr Lawless now intends to keep the whole of the money in the district if possible, and has therefore instituted the present Consultation. Thames people are of a well known speculative disposition, and, while therefore we may regret to see it grow into such large proportions both here and in other parts of the colony, it is a step in the right direction to have the management of a local character.⁴⁴

He had arranged 'another of his favourite consultations' for the Dunedin Cup the previous year.⁴⁵ Even after moving to Waiorongomai, for a time he retained ownership of this hotel.⁴⁶

As at Coromandel, Lawless played cricket, and was elected to the management, match, ground, and selection committees of the club.⁴⁷ He captained the Thames team against Waitoa in 1880 and against Auckland the following year, and played against Auckland once more in 1882.⁴⁸ In April 1882, a unique report of ill-feeling concerning Lawless was reported: 'It is highly improbable that Lawless and [Francis] Eggington [a telegraphist]⁴⁹ will play cricket together again. The latter has become incensed at some slight which he alleges Lawless put upon him at the match, and has consequently declined to meet Tommy on the field again'.⁵⁰

In November 1880, he was unanimously elected secretary of the Thames Jockey Club.⁵¹ At the annual races, 'the obliging secretary ... was most attentive to his duties and fulfilled them admirably'.⁵² Two days later, 'much credit' was due to him 'for the systematic manner in which he has

⁴⁴ *Thames Star*, 29 January 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Thames Star*, 12 January 1880, p. 2, 3 February 1880, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 March 1882, p. 2.

⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 September 1877, p. 3, 29 October 1877, p. 2, 21 September 1878, p. 2, 20 September 1880, p. 3, 8 October 1880, p. 2, 6 October 1881, p. 3; 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 21 January 1882, p. 294.

⁴⁸ *Waikato Times*, 26 February 1880, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 12 March 1881, p. 2; 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 4 March 1882, p. 398.

⁴⁹ See *Thames Electoral Roll*, 1882, p. 7.

⁵⁰ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 8 April 1882, p. 54.

⁵¹ *Thames Star*, 5 November 1880, p. 3.

⁵² *Thames Advertiser*, 28 December 1880, p. 3.

performed the duties of secretary'.⁵³ The following March, a correspondent wrote that 'Tommy Lawless was awfully slated at the result of the Carbine Championship Match'.⁵⁴

In the only report of his artistic skills, at the Sydney Exhibition of 1880 he was 'commended' for a framed wool work.⁵⁵

Lawless was a prominent member of the Volunteer movement. In March 1877, he enrolled in the Hauraki Rifle Volunteers, but a year later his name was crossed off the list with 'Supernumerary' noted beside it;⁵⁶ clearly the company was over-subscribed. Instead, the following month he was elected a sub-lieutenant in the Thames Naval Volunteers, being promoted to lieutenant a year later.⁵⁷ Described as 'indefatigable', he was secretary and paymaster in 1878 and 1879.⁵⁸ When he resigned these two posts in mid-1879 he was presented with a 'very handsome gold watch' as a testimonial to his efficiency; the auditors had reported that 'a neater or better kept set of books we have never seen'.⁵⁹ In September that year, he was secretary for the Thames District Belt shooting competition.⁶⁰ Two months later, a newspaper noted that volunteers frequently 'block up' his shop, using his 'large room' for meetings, an arrangement he was happy to continue.⁶¹ In early 1880, he captained a team of Thames shooters against a Waitoa one.⁶² In 1881, 'the popular lieut' was described as being 'awfully elated at the result of the Carbine Championship Match'.⁶³ In August 1882 he resigned his commission as senior lieutenant, having moved to Waiorongomai.⁶⁴

⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1880, p. 3.

⁵⁴ 'Thames Jottings', *Observer*, 12 March 1881, p. 271.

⁵⁵ *Thames Star*, 25 August 1880, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Hauraki Rifle Volunteers, Nominal Rolls to 11 August 1877, 31 March 1878, Army Department, ARM 41, 1883/1ap, 1883/1aq, ANZ-A.

⁵⁷ *New Zealand Gazette*, 25 July 1878, p. 1049, 17 July 1879, p. 976.

⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 September 1878, p. 2, 17 June 1879, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1879, p. 3, 5 July 1879, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1879, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 November 1879, p. 3.

⁶² *Waikato Times*, 26 February 1880, p. 3.

⁶³ *Observer*, 'Thames Jottings', 12 March 1881, p. 271, 9 July 1881, p. 475.

⁶⁴ *Observer*, 4 March 1882, p. 398; *Thames Star*, 31 July 1882, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1250.

Lawless continued to invest in local mines. In 1877, he held 90 of the 20,000 shares in the Queen of Beauty Extended Company.⁶⁵ The following year, he was warned that his 50 shares in the Perseverance Company would be forfeited if he did not pay the fifth call.⁶⁶ In 1880, he held 100 of the 8,000 shares in the Luck's All Company, and in the following March was warned that these would be forfeited if a call was unpaid.⁶⁷ As well, he was required to pay a sixpenny call in the Columbia Company or forfeit his 50 shares.⁶⁸ At the end of 1881 he bought a quarter share in the Prince Imperial Licensed Holding, which was converted the following year into 150 of the 18,000 shares in the New Prince Imperial Company.⁶⁹

In 1909, the *Observer* commented that he had once been 'as well known' at Thames 'as the Big Pump with which he was formerly associated'.⁷⁰ The nature of this association was not made clear, and there was no contemporary report of his having been involved with it.

TE AROHA AND WAIORONGOMAI MINING

On 7 December 1880, Lawless obtained a miner's right for Te Aroha.⁷¹ That month, he acquired 100 of the 12,000 shares in the Aroha Gold Mining Company, which was to develop the Prospectors' Claim.⁷² Clearly having great hopes for the field, in early January a store being erected for him was in a 'forward state'.⁷³ The following month, he was 'on the point of clearing out' from Thames for Te Aroha.⁷⁴ As he did not clear out immediately, presumably because of disillusionment with the new field, he did not occupy the new store. That he retained his interest in the area was illustrated in October 1881, when he gave Harry Kenrick, the warden,⁷⁵ several parcels of

⁶⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 18 October 1877, p. 1035.

⁶⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 August 1878, p. 2.

⁶⁷ *New Zealand Gazette*, 22 July 1880, p. 1065; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 March 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Thames Star*, 28 May 1881, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Thames Star*, 20 December 1881, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 12 January 1882, p. 66.

⁷⁰ *Observer*, 3 July 1909, p. 4.

⁷¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 714, issued 7 December 1880, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1f, ANZ-A.

⁷² *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796.

⁷³ *Waikato Times*, 8 January 1881, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Advertisement, *Thames Star*, 15 February 1881, p. 2.

⁷⁵ See paper on his life.

stone taken from the New Find at Waiorongomai.⁷⁶ Lawless did not acquire an interest in this claim, but did become a shareholder in nine others. In June 1882, he bought from Thomas Gavin⁷⁷ one third of a share in the Queen and three quarters of a share in the Smile of Fortune, both for £5;⁷⁸ on neither claim did fortune smile. On the same day, he purchased a share in the Young Colonial from Gavin for £20, transferring it to the Colonist Company one month later.⁷⁹ Initially he held 1,000 shares in this, and by February 1885 had sold 300; by August that year he had 800, and was warned that these would be forfeited if a call remained unpaid.⁸⁰ Also on the same day in June 1882 and also from Gavin, he purchased a third of a share in the Canadian Nos. 1 and 2 for £15; when the Canadian Company was formed three months later, he held 233 shares.⁸¹ By February 1885, he retained 183 shares, all liable to forfeiture.⁸²

In June 1883, he became a shareholder in both the Prince Imperial and Last Chance, which three months later were transferred to the Princess Company, in which he held 1,000 shares and was a director.⁸³ In August that year he bought a quarter share in the May Queen for £10, three months before it was floated as a company.⁸⁴ Holding 250 shares in it, when he failed to pay a call three months later was warned they were liable to

⁷⁶ *Thames Star*, 22 October 1881, p. 3.

⁷⁷ See paper on his life.

⁷⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 13, 39, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 385, 386, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 2, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 387, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 10 August 1882, p. 1101; *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 7, 1 August 1885, p. 7.

⁸¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 53, 54, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 388, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1264.

⁸² Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 14 February 1885, p. 7.

⁸³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 286, 287, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 152, 155, BBAV 11500/9a; Company Files, BBAE 10286/13f, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 18 October 1883, p. 1518.

⁸⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 29, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, no. 348, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

forfeiture.⁸⁵ His last interest was taken up in September 1883, in the Clunes,⁸⁶ a worthless claim.

His wife purchased shares in the Waiorongomai Company, formed in April 1883, and at the end of the following year was warned her 50 shares were liable to forfeiture.⁸⁷

In October 1884, after being convinced to sign a petition supporting the leasing of the tramway he was then convinced to sign a counter-petition opposing this.⁸⁸ After that date he displayed no further interest in Waiorongomai mines until 1905, when as a vendor of the Cadman Company he received partly paid-up shares.⁸⁹

PUBLICAN AT WAIORONGOMAI

In early January 1882, Lawless applied for three business sites, allotments 9-11 in Section 14 of the Waiorongomai settlement, being granted these late that month.⁹⁰ In April, he was granted allotments 1, 10 and 11 of what was now Block 1.⁹¹ On his land he erected a hotel and outhouses, mortgaged to John Neal, a Thames butcher,⁹² in May 1884 for £1,062.⁹³ His only other land dealings were to acquire two residence sites at Waiorongomai in February 1884.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 1883, p. 1518; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1884, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 150, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁷ *New Zealand Gazette*, 31 May 1883, p. 722; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 7.

⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 2.

⁸⁹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 132 no. 849, ANZ-A.

⁹⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 91-94, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

⁹¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 166, BBAV 11505/3a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 8, 9, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

⁹² See *Thames Advertiser*, advertisement, 9 September 1887, p. 3, 21 December 1888, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 10 December 1888, p. 2.

⁹³ Mortgage between Thomas Lawless and John Neal, 6 May 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Certified Instruments 1884, BBAV 11581/5a, ANZ-A.

⁹⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 145, 146, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

In mid-December 1881, with another man he applied for a new hotel 'at the New Find, Te Aroha',⁹⁵ meaning the future Waiorongomai, not the claim. The following February, a newspaper reported that 'one gentleman, whose faith in the future of the new discovery cannot be questioned, has commenced the erection of an hotel almost at the foot of the proposed' lower road up the valley.⁹⁶ From the beginning of January 1882 until September 1886, Lawless was licensee of the Waiorongomai Hotel, jointly owned with Neal until June 1885, when Neal became the sole owner.⁹⁷ At the beginning of May 1882, he took possession of his newly erected hotel.⁹⁸ It had 19 rooms, exclusive of his family's rooms.⁹⁹ When the licensing court considered his application for a license, the magistrate considered that Henry Crump, the local architect,¹⁰⁰ had produced 'the best plan of a hotel he had ever seen'.¹⁰¹ In November, a Thames reporter wrote that 'it struck us the claim bringing in the most immediate return' was his hotel, which three months was described as 'a very good building'.¹⁰² Lawless continued to have a good trade while mining was in its early flush, and made himself especially popular during the early 1884 strike,¹⁰³ when he 'generously came to the front with an offer of one month's "grub" free gratis for nothing, "on trust" for better times. The hardy miner won't forget that – especially if pints are included. Such *Lawless* conduct on his part will be resented by the directors'.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁵ *Thames Star*, 14 December 1881, p. 3.

⁹⁶ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Register of Publicans' Licenses 1880-1892, no. 9, BBAV 11494/1a; Register of Publicans' Licenses 1882-1892, nos. 5, 18, 23, BBAV 11496/1a, ANZ-A; Te Aroha Licensing Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1882, p. 3.

⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 May 1882, p. 3.

⁹⁹ *Thames Star*, 2 November 1882, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ See advertisement, *Te Aroha Mail*, 10 June 1882, p. 1; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1; *Thames Advertiser*, 23 August 1894, p. 2; 'Thames Gossip', *Observer*, 1 September 1894, p. 23.

¹⁰¹ Te Aroha Licensing Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1882, p. 3; for plan showing the exterior, see 'Proposed Hotel Building for Mr Thos. Lawless, Te Aroha', n.d. [1882], Te Aroha Warden's Court, BBAV 11590/5, ANZ-A.

¹⁰² 'Visit to Waiorongomai', *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1882, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 20 February 1883, p. 3.

¹⁰³ See paper on the strike at Waiorongomai in 1884.

¹⁰⁴ 'Nemo', 'At the Corner', *Thames Star*, 12 January 1884, p. 2.

One curious lack of knowledge about his trade was revealed in August 1883, when the *Observer* replied to his query: 'Hop Bitter is sold by all the chemists in town. Write to one of them'.¹⁰⁵ In all other aspects, Lawless proved himself as both efficient and popular. When in December 1883 he catered for 40 miners at a banquet celebrating the first crushing, he 'responded in his usual happy manner' to the toast to 'host and hostess'.¹⁰⁶ In July 1885 he fed about 70 men honouring Peter Ferguson,¹⁰⁷ a correspondent reporting that 'much credit' was 'due to Host Lawless for the admirable style of the banquet'.¹⁰⁸

In mid-1883, Lawless announced that Crump had been asked to design extensive additions to his hotel.¹⁰⁹ By early September, when the plans were nearly finished, a newspaper revealed both the existing facilities and those that would be added:

Another storey will be placed over the whole of the main building, with a balcony running around the front and south end of the house. The upper storey will contain two large private sitting-rooms, ten bed-rooms, a bath-room and lavatory. The present entrance will be widened to eight feet, and made into a private entrance, keeping the family portion of the hotel entirely private from the bar and tap-rooms. A large flight to stairs will be affixed at the end of the present passage near the billiard-room. The late additions made a few months ago for bed-rooms will be converted into a public hall, a passage six feet wide will divide the hall from the hotel building. Ample provision for escape in case of fire is provided, together with all the etceteras necessary to constitute the Waiorongomai a first-class family hotel. Mr Lawless deserves great credit for the plucky enterprise, on all occasions, he has displayed in anticipating the requirements and comforts of the public. Mr Crump has certainly displayed great skill and taste in producing the plans, and deserves the highest praise for the useful and ornamental design. We understand tenders will be called for immediately the fine weather sets in. The state of the roads, together with the fact of having to unroof the present building in rainy weather, prevents tenders being called immediately.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ 'To Correspondents', *Observer*, 11 August 1883, p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

¹⁰⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 July 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

The expanded building would provide 40 bedrooms.¹¹¹ In November, he accepted a tender of £624 10s.¹¹² The following March, a visitor reported that his hotel, 'the principal one' there, was 'undergoing extensive alterations',¹¹³ as reported in detail in the local newspaper:

The appearance of the old building is now completely transformed. A second storey has been erected, and contains 12 apartments comprising large sitting-rooms, single and double bedrooms and a bathroom, besides a handsome suite of apartments for the accommodation of families. On the ground floor important alterations have been made. The dining-room has been greatly enlarged. Additional space has also been given to the commercial room, and various other alterations have been effected. On the outside a handsome balcony will be carried round the two frontages of the building and will add greatly to its appearance. A fire escape connects the upper floor with the ground at the back of the premises, and nothing is being left undone to ensure the safety and comfort of visitors. When finished the house will be one of the handsomest as well as one of the most comfortable in the whole district, and the spirited effort of the proprietor to keep pace with the growing requirements of the times, will doubtless ensure for him a rapid increase of business. The contractors ... are carrying out the work in a most creditable manner.¹¹⁴

Another newspaper agreed that the enlarged building presented 'a very creditable appearance'.¹¹⁵ The total cost of the extension, £800, exceeded the tender.¹¹⁶ His hotel was so well known that in 1886 a newspaper referred to 'Lawless' corner, Waiorongomai', without having to clarify the reference.¹¹⁷

In October 1884, Brown Campbell and Company, which supplied his beer, asked him to 'make arrangements at once to meet amount of your dishonoured bill – which we renewed for you on last falling due, £119 14. Please note that above must be attended to either by cash payment or

¹¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 December 1883, p. 2.

¹¹² *Te Aroha News*, 3 November 1883, p. 2.

¹¹³ *Freeman's Journal*, 28 March 1884, p. 13.

¹¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 15 March 1884, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ *Waikato Times*, 15 March 1884, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ District Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1885, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ *Waikato Times*, 11 May 1886, p. 2.

proper security'; it expected to hear from him by return mail.¹¹⁸ His response, which has not survived, was regarded as quite unsatisfactory. 'Your letter received but you have not replied to main point requiring arrangement. We do not like writing anything in the shape of threatening letters, but you must see that if you can't meet your engagements it is only right you should give us security', which he was instructed to arrange with his lawyer.¹¹⁹

At the beginning of February 1885, it was announced that, under the company's writ of sale, his furniture (including a piano), billiard table, and bar stock was to be sold by the sheriff, but before the sale he was adjudged bankrupt.¹²⁰ He told the creditors' meeting that 'the immediate cause of his filing was on account of the pressure brought to bear on him' by the brewery, for when it 'put an execution into the house for £170' he 'had no alternative but to seek the protection of the Court in the interests of his other creditors'.

The great depression of trade for some time past, and inability to collect monies due were the only cause of his filing. He had made large additions to his premises some time ago, in expectation of increased trade, and this had first of all got him into difficulties. At the time these additions to the hotel were made he had not nearly sufficient accommodation for his customers; other hotels in the township were enlarging, and the prospects of the field at the time fully warranted the erecting of increased accommodation.

Thomas Wells, a local merchant,¹²¹ confirmed that Lawless was 'fully justified in making the additions' because of the prospects. Having had

¹¹⁸ Brown Campbell and Co. to Thomas Lawless, 16 October 1884, Letterbook 1882-1884, p. 982, Brown Campbell and Company Papers, MS 51/126, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

¹¹⁹ Brown Campbell and Co. to Thomas Lawless, 24 October 1884, Letterbook 1882-1884, p. 989, Brown Campbell and Company Papers, MS 51/126, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

¹²⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 February 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 7, 14 February 1885, p. 7.

¹²¹ See *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 3, 7 July 1883, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 10 March 1883, p. 2, 7 June 1892, p. 2, 28 August 1894, p. 5; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 768; *Observer*, 18 February 1905, p. 5, 15 April 1905, p. 5, 26 August 1905, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 29 April 1910, p. 6.

‘plenty of opportunity for observing the manner in which Mr Lawless conducted his hotel’, Wells considered him to be ‘a man who attended to his business well and kept down expenses, and he thought it was not his fault, but simply through bad luck, the general depression that had taken place in fact’, that caused his bankruptcy. His liabilities amounted to £1,788 1s 4d, and the assets were estimated at £2,565. The latter comprised his hotel and allotments, worth £1,600, book debts worth ‘say £140’, furniture and stock-in-trade valued at £480, the land inherited from his father, and 700 shares in the Colonist Company,¹²² ‘no market at present, say £175’. The only secured creditor, Neal, ‘whose security consisted in a mortgage over the hotel for £1200’, wanted ‘the whole affair’ to be ‘wound up at once, nothing could possibly be gained by waiting’. Lawless was ‘appointed to take charge of the estate’.¹²³ ‘The creditors expressed sympathy’, and wanting ‘to realize as soon as possible’ appointed supervisors ‘to assist him in the temporary management of the business’.¹²⁴

The following month, at the district court Lawless stated that he had been solvent during the past year and that his assets would cover his liabilities ‘if of same value as they cost me’. After spending £800 extending his hotel, ‘a depression in trade’ befell the district, and he ‘was forced to give credit for board & lodging’ because miners were paid only at long intervals. He had given up all his property to his creditors.¹²⁵ As his examination was ‘declared sufficient’, he was to be discharged at the next sitting.¹²⁶ At this, the assignee reported that he had ‘no fault to find except with the amount of credit given’, but noted that this ‘was given in 1882 when business was larger’; he thought these debts had been left ‘too long on the books’. The discharge was granted.¹²⁷ In 1888, Lawless paid a first and final dividend of 1s 1 1/4d.¹²⁸

¹²² Another newspaper recorded that these shares were in the Colonial Insurance Company: *Thames Advertiser*, 20 February 1885, p. 3.

¹²³ *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 February 1885, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 20 February 1885, p. 3.

¹²⁵ Thames District Court, Bankruptcy Cases 1885-1887, entry for 3 March 1885, BACL 14415/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁶ District Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1885, p. 3.

¹²⁷ Thames District Court, Bankruptcy Cases 1885-1887, entry for 21 April 1885, BACL 14415/1a, ANZ-A; District Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 April 1885, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette*, 24 March 1888, p. 92.

In March 1885, the *Observer*'s Waiorongomai correspondent noted that 'Times must be bad here when a publican wants someone to take a borrowed five pounds out in kai'.¹²⁹ By late June, a 'considerable portion' of his hotel was locked up because of reduced demand for accommodation, and less than three months later it was announced that the mortgagee would sell it.¹³⁰ Reportedly he said 'that 'hif times don't himprove, 'e will 'ave to take 'hin washing'.¹³¹ The only person interested in acquiring his hotel, a Thames brewer, Louis Ehrenfried,¹³² acquired the hotel and the three allotments for £500,¹³³ a very good bargain. Although no longer the owner, Lawless continued as the licensee, and in the following February supplied the luncheon in the public hall for 80 people celebrating the opening of the railway line to Te Aroha, his catering reflecting 'great credit' on him.¹³⁴ At the end of June, when the license expired, Ehrenfried closed the hotel, as he wanted his Premier Hotel to be his sole outlet.¹³⁵ Consequently, Lawless moved to Te Aroha. At a farewell concert, the wife of Henry Hopper Adams,¹³⁶ on behalf of the residents, presented his wife with a purse of sovereigns 'and referred in eulogistic terms to Mr and Mrs Lawless, the regret felt that the purposed leaving the district, and wishing them success'.¹³⁷

OTHER WAYS OF EARNING A LIVING

Because of his bankruptcy and the fading of his hotel trade, Lawless tried a number of occupations before leaving the district. In August 1885, with Edward Gallagher,¹³⁸ he won a contract of £230 from the Waitoa Road Board to construct part of a new road from Maungakawa, in Scotsman's Valley, to the Waiorongomai landing, but abandoned it two months later.¹³⁹

¹²⁹ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 21 March 1885, p. 10.

¹³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 27 June 1885, p. 2, 12 September 1885, p. 7.

¹³¹ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 5 September 1885, p. 4.

¹³² See paper on Harry Kenrick.

¹³³ *Te Aroha News*, 26 September 1885, p. 2.

¹³⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 2, 6 March 1886, p. 2.

¹³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1886, p. 2.

¹³⁶ See paper on his life.

¹³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 17 July 1886, p. 2.

¹³⁸ See paper on his life.

¹³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, Waitoa Road Board, 1 August 1885, p. 2, 3 October 1885, p. 2.

Also in August, and also with Gallagher, he obtained the contract to construct five chains of Peter Ferguson's New Era tramway for £56.¹⁴⁰ Their tender for another stage of it was declined later that month.¹⁴¹ In October, Ferguson responded to a report, supplied by another contractor,¹⁴² that a slip had caused 'great damage' to their work:

This statement is not true, for no slips whatever have occurred on their section. The contractors were trying to form an embankment by building up the sides with stones and timber, instead of giving a sufficient slope as required by their specifications. What has happened to such faulty work was predicted, and would take place after the first rain, viz, the mullock would sink and the structure give way. The report to which I refer is therefore liable to mislead those who do not know the circumstances, for the truth is, their contract has never been half finished, which is another instance of the many that have occurred in the district of contractors undertaking work and afterwards proving themselves unable to perform same in [the] time specified.¹⁴³

There were no further references to Lawless working as a contractor.

In January 1886, he was appointed clerk, treasurer, and foreman of works for the Ohinemuri County Council for three months.¹⁴⁴ When he went to Paeroa to take up these posts, on discovering that he was not to be employed permanently but only for this very limited term he declined to accept the appointment.¹⁴⁵ Although prepared to work 'on the original basis as conveyed to me at a meeting of the Council' in late December,¹⁴⁶ a permanent position was not offered.

In November 1886, Lawless set himself up as a house, land, and mining agent on the business site owned by his mother opposite the Te Aroha domain, and advertised that produce would be 'Bought and Sold on Commission'.¹⁴⁷ That this section was sold the following month suggested

¹⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 August 1885, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 August 1885, p. 2.

¹⁴² Editorial note to letter from Peter Ferguson, *Te Aroha News*, 10 October 1885, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Letter from Peter Ferguson, *Te Aroha News*, 10 October 1885, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 January 1886, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1886, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ Ohinemuri County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1886, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 20 November 1886, p. 3, 27 November 1886, p. 2.

that he did not attract much custom.¹⁴⁸ Also in November, he asked the council to halve the cost of his auctioneer's license because more than half the year had gone; as the law prohibited a reduction, he had to pay the full £10.¹⁴⁹

INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Lawless was prominent in sporting and social events, which cannot have done his hotel trade any harm. Regarded as one of the best local cricketers, the *Te Aroha News* thought the 'selection committees for Interprovincial matches should not forget' him.¹⁵⁰ In 1884 he played for Waiorongomai against Te Aroha and for the latter team against Hamilton.¹⁵¹ Elected to its committee when the Jockey Club was formed in 1883, in later years he remained a member and was a steward at race meetings.¹⁵² His horse, 'Whispering Jack', participated in the flat races.¹⁵³

Both Lawless and his wife were prominent musicians. He contributed to a concert in aid of the Catholic Church Building Fund, and Catherine sang an Ave Maria at the opening celebrations for St Joseph's.¹⁵⁴ Despite being Catholics, they sang for other denominations' festivities, for instance in February 1883, when Catherine sang at a Presbyterian concert.¹⁵⁵ When a Church of England concert was held later that year, she sang in a duet, 'Money Matters', and her acting was judged 'worthy of a professional, and received a hearty encore'. Her solo, 'Oh steer my bark to Erin's Isle' was also encored.¹⁵⁶ Lawless sang at another Anglican concert in the following year.¹⁵⁷ They also sang at secular occasions, such as the opening of the

¹⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1886, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 25 November 1886, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1886, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1884, p. 7; *Waikato Times*, 25 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁵² *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2, 22 November 1884, p. 2, 16 January 1886, p. 2.

¹⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 14 December 1883, p. 10, 21 March 1884, p. 12; *Te Aroha News*, 15 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Waikato Times*, 24 February 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1883, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 30 August 1884, p. 2.

Waiorongomai public hall, when Lawless also accompanied the local Christy Minstrels on the piano.¹⁵⁸ At the opening of the Waiorongomai school, Catherine played 'several choice selections on the piano forte', and then played for the evening dance; 'indeed much of the success of the affair is due to her'.¹⁵⁹ They both played the piano at dances.¹⁶⁰ Great regret was expressed when Catherine left Waiorongomai, as she had assisted all the entertainments there.¹⁶¹

When the Catholic bishop visited Coromandel in 1872, Lawless had been one of those signing an address welcoming him.¹⁶² When the annual concert and ball to raise money for St Joseph's were held, he was secretary of the organizing committee and took part in the concerts.¹⁶³

After a meeting held at his hotel in 1883 formed an Accident Relief Fund Committee to assist miners, he became its first secretary.¹⁶⁴ When elected to the committee in the following year, he was thanked for his work.¹⁶⁵

In June 1883, Lawless, representing Waiorongomai residents, complained to the Te Aroha School Committee, of which he was a member, about the 'apathetic action' of the Board of Education over providing a school there.¹⁶⁶ Much more controversial was his involvement in a dispute over religious education. In early August, after 'a rather warm discussion', by four votes to two the committee declined the Wesleyan minister's request to use the schoolroom for one hour after school for religious instruction, the *Te Aroha News* wondered whether this was the first time in New Zealand that such a request had been refused.¹⁶⁷ The minister publicly criticized the decision, pointing out, amongst other points, that Catholic children did not have the Bible 'forced upon' them, but did not mention Lawless by name.¹⁶⁸ After the minister protested to the Board of Education, it resolved that the

¹⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 8 November 1884, p. 7, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 18 August 1883, p. 12; *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1885, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 24 July 1886, p. 2.

¹⁶² *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 November 1872, p. 14.

¹⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1885, p. 7, 3 April 1886, p. 7, 24 April 1886, p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1884, pp. 2, 7.

¹⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from G.T. Marshall, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

committee was free 'to grant or refuse any application', a rider that it disapproved of the decision being defeated.¹⁶⁹ The *New Zealand Herald* regretted both decisions. Concerning the school committee, it considered there might 'be something in the demeanour of the clergyman, or in his relations with the committee, or in personal objections which they may have to himself, qualifying the nature of this refusal'. It saw the board's support for the committee as unsurprising considering 'the present reign of foolishness, and whimsicalities in the Board', but stressed that the Act gave unqualified approval for religious education after school hours.¹⁷⁰ Citing its views, the *Te Aroha News* sarcastically noted that 'Altogether the action of the local committee has made them famous, and it is not often that a small country body of the kind has become so widely known and so celebrated'.¹⁷¹ The *Te Aroha Observer* Man commented more concisely: 'The Heathens have had the best of it at the School Committee meeting, and the little olive branches are to remain in heathen darkness'.¹⁷²

In October, another committee meeting voted by three votes to two to rescind the decision. Lawless, who voted against the motion, 'said it was not the Rev Mr Marshall personally he opposed, but on the broad ground that any school was not the proper place for Biblical or other religious instruction by any minister, under the present system of education'. He also 'complained of remarks by the Press (specially the "Observer") with regard to those who had refused the application on a previous occasion, and considered they were most improper and uncalled for'. By the same votes, Bible study was permitted at Waiorongomai after school hours, meaning that children whose parents so desired could attend Bible study every alternate Tuesday afternoon.¹⁷³ The *Observer* noted Lawless 'took occasion to pass some strictures on the OBSERVER for its condemnation of the dog-in-the-manger policy of the committee adopted at the former meeting; but as this second decision practically endorses every word' its *Te Aroha*

¹⁶⁹ Board of Education, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1883, p. 6; *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1883, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁷² 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 15 September 1883, p. 15.

¹⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1883, p. 2.

correspondent said in a now-missing article¹⁷⁴ and justified his views, ‘there is no necessity to say more on the subject’.¹⁷⁵

A newspaper columnist was pleased that ‘the notorious case of the Te Aroha School Committee’ had been ‘satisfactorily ended’, for its initial decision had been ‘in direct defiance of the law’:

Mr Lawless – appropriately named in this case – who appears to have led in the attempt to bring discredit on the system, explains that he opposed the grant “on the broad ground that any school was not the proper place for Biblical or other religious instruction by any minister under the present system of education,” and in doing so he has shown that the committee of school management is not the proper place for him, or any like him, under the present system of education.¹⁷⁶

The following February, Lawless was re-elected to the committee, receiving 53 votes compared with the highest polling candidate’s 117,¹⁷⁷ but did not stand for election subsequently.

In mid-1883, at a meeting held at his hotel he moved that Waiorongomai become a town district, and was appointed to the committee charged with drawing up the necessary petition.¹⁷⁸ He was also elected to a committee to collect signatures for a Te Aroha borough, and to another formed to protect the interests of the district.¹⁷⁹ In July 1884, he was one of five men who called at meeting at Waiorongomai to discuss local issues, and was appointed to the committee to try to implement its resolutions.¹⁸⁰ One year later, on behalf of the local publicans, he sought out the licensing commissioners (who were working in Waikato) so that they would return and hold their overdue meeting.¹⁸¹ In December 1886, he was elected to a committee to draw up a petition opposing the closing of the Waiorongomai

¹⁷⁴ Pages 19 onwards of *Observer*, 29 September 1883, are missing.

¹⁷⁵ *Observer*, 29 October 1883, p. 14.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Pollex’, ‘Sketcher’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1883, p. 5.

¹⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

¹⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 July 1883, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 16 July 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 5 July 1884, p. 7, 12 July 1884, p. 7.

¹⁸¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 June 1885, p. 2.

telegraph office, and the following month was elected to a committee to draw up a plan for a water supply and to collect subscriptions.¹⁸²

LIVING AT THAMES ONCE MORE

In March 1887, Edward Peel, a former Te Aroha resident who had been forced into bankruptcy in 1885 because ‘the general decline of the district, and the failure of some of his customers’,¹⁸³ transferred his Thames business as an aerated water and cordial manufacturer to Lawless.¹⁸⁴ He managed this for an unknown period, but retained ownership until the start of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁵ In early December 1887, with another man he convened a meeting to organize athletic sports on New Year’s Day, chairing the meeting and being appointed secretary and treasurer.¹⁸⁶ Early in the following year, he left for Australia, returning in August;¹⁸⁷ it is not known what work he had sought there. In May 1890, he applied for the renewal of the license for the Prince Imperial Hotel, which was transferred to the Governor Bowen Hotel late that year because of insufficient accommodation at the former.¹⁸⁸ He then worked for John Hague Smith and Company,¹⁸⁹ ironmongers at Thames, Paeroa, and, later, Waihi.¹⁹⁰

Lawless expressed interest in establishing a rifle club in 1891,¹⁹¹ but was not involved in creating it. In that year he was captain of the Tararu Cricket Club.¹⁹² His only recorded involvement in national politics was in

¹⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1886, p. 2, 22 January 1887, p. 2.

¹⁸³ District Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 May 1885, p. 3, 17 June 1885, p. 3; *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette of New Zealand*, 21 November 1885, p. 392; *Te Aroha News*, 28 March 1888, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1887, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ Death Certificate of Joseph Lawless, 29 December 1887, 1887/4889, BDM; *Thames Star*, 8 November 1901, p. 4, 26 April 1912, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 December 1887, p. 3, 10 December 1887, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 August 1888, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 May 1890, p. 2, 4 June 1890, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 8 November 1890, p. 2, 16 December 1890, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 March 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 850, 889, 924.

¹⁹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 May 1891, p. 2.

¹⁹² *Thames Advertiser*, 5 December 1891, p. 2.

1890, when he supported the Liberal Party as secretary of Alfred Jerome Cadman's election committee.¹⁹³

In September 1890, Lawless was one of the five owners of the Kenilworth claim, at Shellbank Creek, with 4 1/2 of the 20 shares; five days after it was registered, he sold his interest to his wife.¹⁹⁴ The following week, he was reportedly one of four men working this mine.¹⁹⁵ In October, he sued another miner for an interest in the Hilda, for three days after agreeing to sell for £7 this man declined to accept or to sign the transfer. Lawless sought either the interest or £50 in damages, but was non-suited because of not paying the money within the time stipulated.¹⁹⁶

LIVING AT PAEROA

Probably in 1891, Lawless moved to Paeroa to manage Smith's branch ironmongery shop. When he resigned in March 1898 after working for this firm for nine years his employer presented him with a watch inscribed: 'For Long and Faithful Service'.¹⁹⁷ Immediately after his resignation, he became licensee of the Royal Mail Hotel and was welcomed by a 'smoke social' that also farewelled the previous landlord.¹⁹⁸ He left both hotel and district in November 1899.¹⁹⁹ Whilst living there he had described himself as both an ironmonger and an accountant.²⁰⁰

Lawless was modestly successful financially. In February 1895, Brown Bros, contractors, sued for £60 19s 3d, a dishonoured promissory note.²⁰¹ This was settled in June by his giving them a local bill of £80 10s 11d; in

¹⁹³ *Thames Star*, 18 November 1890, p. 2, advertisement, 4 December 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1888-1892, folio 86, BACL 14355/2a, ANZ-A.

¹⁹⁵ *Thames Star*, 16 September 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 31 October 1890, p. 2, 14 November 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 January 1893, p. 2, 25 July 1895, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 March 1898, p. 2; *New Zealand Police Gazette*, 27 May 1908, p. 239.

¹⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1898, p. 4; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 March 1898, p. 2; *Observer*, 23 April 1898, p. 7.

¹⁹⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 1 November 1899, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 January 1895, p. 163, 11 June 1896, p. 942.

²⁰¹ Paeroa Magistrate's Court, Complaint Book 1881-1896, 16/1895, BACL 13745/1a, ANZ-A.

recording this arrangement his bank described him as ‘of little means’.²⁰² In 1899, when a National Bank clerk boarding at his hotel convinced him to transfer his account to this bank, he had a ‘fair credit’ account.²⁰³ In 1908 he owned a house and land in Paeroa with a combined value of £460 and 32 acres outside the township valued at £384.²⁰⁴

Still an enthusiastic cricketer, he was elected vice-captain of the Ohinemuri club in January 1893.²⁰⁵ Three years later, he was on both its general and selection committees.²⁰⁶ He was also a member of the Ohinemuri Jockey Club.²⁰⁷ He was the last candidate elected to the Ohinemuri School Committee in 1895, receiving 29 votes compared with the highest vote of 45.²⁰⁸ In June 1897 he was appointed a justice of the peace, but resigned his commission in May 1898.²⁰⁹

INVOLVEMENT IN THE MINING BOOM OF THE 1890s

In January 1893, he was noted as having shares in two claims, a water race, and a battery, all at Neavesville.²¹⁰ In the following year he was a director of the Portsea and Grace Darling companies, at Waitekauri.²¹¹ A financial guarantor for the latter, he chaired at least one shareholders’ meeting.²¹² In September, the chairman of directors of the Portsea had to

²⁰² Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Balance Books, Half-Yearly Balance at 30 September 1895, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²⁰³ Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, Balance Books, Half Yearly Balance at 31 March 1899, Accounts Closed, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²⁰⁴ Ohinemuri County Council, Paeroa Riding, Valuation of 31 March 1908, folio 35, Valuation Department, BBBC 14670, A150/653, ANZ-A.

²⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 January 1893, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Photograph, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 April 1901, Supplement, p. 6.

²⁰⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 26 June 1897, p. 4; *New Zealand Gazette*, 5 May 1898, p. 760.

²¹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 January 1893, p. 2.

²¹¹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 67 nos. 460, 462, ANZ-A; G.E. Alderton, *Auckland Goldfields Maps and Investors’ Guide* (Auckland, 1896), p. 2; *List of Companies Registered with the Auckland Chamber of Mines* (Auckland, 1898), folio 2.

²¹² Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Half-Yearly Balance Books, Balance as at 30 September 1895, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington; *Thames Advertiser* 18 September 1894, p. 2.

admit the ‘unfortunate mistake’ of mistaking chrome for gold and to insist that ‘the directors were entirely innocent of any deception’. The manager explained that when the reef was cut, ‘he washed the prospect and went to Mr Lawless. That gentleman called on the bank assayer, who had no hesitation in saying it was gold. Mr Lawless then said a stone could be taken for assay’.²¹³

In early 1895, he was an original shareholder in the United, Imperial, and Ivanhoe companies, at Karangahake.²¹⁴ In August, when he owned 30 acres near the river at Owharoa, a lawyer arranged that an application for a special claim would be made in his name as a ‘dummy’ for the Owharoa Company, and in the following month he was granted the Tunnel, which was transferred to a syndicate a year later.²¹⁵ Two months later, he was granted the Globe, which became part of the Waitekauri United Company’s ground in the following May.²¹⁶

In March 1896, he was granted the Australia at Waitekauri, which he conveyed to another investor four months later.²¹⁷ Also in March, with a partner, he owned the Byron Bay Extended at Komata.²¹⁸ Three months later, this became a company in which he held 2,800 of its 80,000 shares.²¹⁹ In 1898, he was a member of the Ohinemuri Prospecting Association,²²⁰ supported it financially but not prospecting.

LIVING AT WAIHI

²¹³ *New Zealand Herald*, 3 August 1894, p. 6.

²¹⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 January 1895, p. 163, 14 February 1895, p. 322, 21 March 1895, p. 545.

²¹⁵ Jackson and Russell to J.A. Miller, 2 August 1895, Letterbook no. 59, p. 452, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; Paeroa Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folio 169, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁶ Paeroa Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folio 196, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁷ Paeroa Warden’s Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folio 112, ZAAP 13294/1b, ANZ-A.

²¹⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 5 March 1896, p. 6.

²¹⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 June 1896, p. 942.

²²⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 1 June 1898, p. 3.

At the beginning of November 1899, it was reported that Lawless, 'the popular licensee of the Royal Mail Hotel at Paeroa', would 'very shortly take over the Waihi (Tanner's) Hotel'.²²¹ The following March, he received this license and transferred his Paeroa one to another publican.²²² Assisted by his second wife, his Commercial Hotel reputedly became the most popular hotel in Ohinemuri.²²³ When the conciliation court arrived in town for a hearing about miners' wages, he provided their accommodation.²²⁴ But his management caused some complaints, as in October 1900, when he pleaded not guilty to failing to keep the hotel's private yard clean, thereby creating a 'public nuisance', but was fined 5s.²²⁵ The following July, he pleaded guilty to digging up Main Street and was fined 5s, pleaded not guilty to digging up the footpath in the same street, a charge that was withdrawn, and pleaded not guilty to letting 'filthy matter' spill onto it, a charge which was dismissed.²²⁶

In September 1901, his son James was sued for forfeiture of a residence site in Waihi South 'on the grounds of non-residence and failure to comply with the conditions of the license'. This was a garden section, bought along with the adjoining one six months previously by Lawless, who held one section in his wife's name and the other in his son's. He had intended to erect a house immediately, but upon discovering that part of the land would be taken for the railway line delayed while awaiting the survey. After this was made, he immediately commenced building the house, but by then the plaint for forfeiture had been made.

The Warden said he thought that it would be almost an injustice where different members of a family held sites which they were occupying together as one home, to forfeit them because houses were not built on each section. No doubt they should have obtained the leave of the Warden to amalgamate the sites, but that would have only been a matter of applying for such leave. He thought, too, that the delay of Lawless in building because he did

²²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 November 1899, p. 2.

²²² *Thames Star*, 8 March 1900, p. 2.

²²³ *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, n.d., cited in *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1919, p. 2.

²²⁴ Cartoon, *Observer*, 27 April 1901, p. 12.

²²⁵ Waihi Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1899-1903, 93/1900, BAFV 13710/1a, ANZ-A.

²²⁶ Waihi Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1899-1903, 73A-76/1901, BAFV 13710/1a, ANZ-A.

not know what part the Government might take was reasonable, and whilst the right thing for him to have done was to have applied for protection, the case, he thought, was one that might justly be dismissed.²²⁷

At the beginning of November 1901, when Lawless transferred his license and left the district, it was noted as 'a curious coincidence' that this was 'the third occasion in which he has sold out of business over a period of 22 months', having sold his aerated factory at Thames and his Paeroa and Waihi hotels.²²⁸ His only involvement in Waihi mining was to acquire 1,000 of the 120,00 shares in the Pride of Waihi Company in May 1901.²²⁹ His financial situation had improved, and an *Observer* fantasy about the future Auckland included Lawless and his wife 'living in luxurious retirement on their magnificent estate at Takapuna'.²³⁰ He did own land there, for a 1903 list of bills discounted by L.D. Nathan and Company, brewers, included one of £700 for Lawless; his bank manager noted that 'proceeds of sale of property at Takapuna will clear'.²³¹

STRATFORD, WHANGANUI, AND AUCKLAND

Instead of retiring to Auckland, they had a holiday, as the *Observer* recorded in May 1902. 'Mr and Mrs Lawless, who are well and popularly known in the "trade," have returned from a trip in the South which combined for them the advantages of a holiday tour and the purposes of business'. They had purchased a hotel at Stratford, in Taranaki, for a five-figure sum, and the *Observer* wished them 'every success in their new venture'.²³² In December, Lawless was described as a 'prominent hotel-keeper'.²³³ His wife, when visiting Auckland in late 1906, said that 'things in Stratford are sound and progressive, and business had improved so much

²²⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 September 1901, p. 37.

²²⁸ *Thames Star*, 8 November 1901, p. 4.

²²⁹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 159 no. 1009, ANZ-A.

²³⁰ *Observer*, Christmas Annual 1901, p. 12.

²³¹ Bank of New Zealand, Auckland Branch, Manager's Diary 1903-1905, p. 31, entry for 30 September 1903, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²³² *Observer*, 10 May 1902, p. 5.

²³³ *Observer*, 6 December 1902, p. 5.

with them that they are enlarging and otherwise improving their hotel'.²³⁴ In 1909, he 'struck weird evidence' that his hotel had once been

conducted by somebody who was lawless by nature, if not by name. In the course of reconstruction operations, a pipe was discovered leading from the cellar up through the bar into an upstairs chimney, and cunningly boarded over so as to escape detection. There are legends that private whisky stills and their products ran free in the district in the wild and woolly early days of settlement, and that this same cellar was connected by secret passages with the Patea river, and Thomas reckons that he has hit upon an important bit of corroboration.²³⁵

Lawless conducted this hotel 'very successfully for over nine years' before selling it and taking over the Rutland Hotel at Whanganui before settling at Takapuna in late 1910, where he erected his final home.²³⁶ He had an unspecified business in Karangahape Road for some time before his death, but his death certificate gave his occupation as retired hotelkeeper.²³⁷ He had business and personal links with Auckland, the manager of the Devonport Ferry Company being a witness at his marriage in 1896 and 12 years later he acquired shares in the Takapuna Tramways and Ferry Company.²³⁸

DEATH

Lawless was only 59 when he died at home in April 1912.²³⁹ A few days previously, he had revisited Stratford, 'and he then appeared to be in excellent health. He was, however, subject to occasional severe heart attacks, and it is supposed that one of these proved fatal'.²⁴⁰ The immediate cause of death was bronchial asthma, combined with a sudden loss of blood

²³⁴ *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 21 November 1906, p. 2.

²³⁵ *Observer*, 3 July 1909, p. 4.

²³⁶ *Stratford Evening Post*, 26 April 1912, p. 5.

²³⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 1912, p. 8; Death Certificate of Thomas Lawless, 26 April 1912, 1912/4012, BDM.

²³⁸ Marriage Certificate of Thomas Lawless, 8 July 1896, 1896/3522, BDM; Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 222 no. 1313, ANZ-A.

²³⁹ Death Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 1912, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ *Stratford Evening Post*, 26 April 1912, p. 5.

pressure affecting an already weakened heart.²⁴¹ Described in an obituary as ‘well known at the Thames in the sixties’, he was buried there.²⁴² The Stratford newspaper described him as ‘well esteemed by all who knew him’.²⁴³ The Thames newspaper referred to his ‘many friends’, and when he was buried at the Tararu cemetery there was a ‘representative gathering’.²⁴⁴ He left an estate worth £14,111 9s 4d,²⁴⁵ indicating that his last 20 years had been financially successful. His will allotted specified sums of money to three children and percentages of the remainder to his widow and the other three children.²⁴⁶

THE FIRST MRS LAWLESS AND THEIR CHILDREN

At the age of 24, in February 1876 Lawless married Catherine Gough, one year his junior, in Auckland.²⁴⁷ She had been born in County Tyrone, Ireland, to Daniel, a plasterer, and Catherine.²⁴⁸ Their first child, Ellen, named in honour of her grandmother, was born that November.²⁴⁹ Leo James, named in honour of his grandfather, was born in March 1878,²⁵⁰ Thomas Augustine in June 1880,²⁵¹ Annie in October 1881,²⁵² and Daniel Frederick in March 1883 (whose birth, for some reason, was not registered).²⁵³ All were baptized at Thames.²⁵⁴ Charles Edward was born at

²⁴¹ Death Certificate of Thomas Lawless, 26 April 1912, 1912/4012, BDM.

²⁴² *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 1912, pp. 1, 8;

²⁴³ *Stratford Evening Post*, 26 April 1912, p. 5.

²⁴⁴ *Thames Star*, 26 April 1912, p. 2, 27 April 1912, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ Testamentary Register 1911-1913, folio 154, BBCB 4208/8, ANZ-A.

²⁴⁶ Probates, BBAE 1549/8557, ANZ-A.

²⁴⁷ Notices of Intentions to Marry 1876, folio 39, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/21, ANZ-W; Marriage Certificate of Thomas Lawless, 22 February 1876, 1876/171, BDM.

²⁴⁸ Birth Certificate of Charles Edward Lawless, 30 September 1884, 1884/6199; Death Certificate of Catherine Lawless, 4 December 1891, 1891/4943, BDM.

²⁴⁹ Birth Certificate of Ellen Lawless, 12 November 1876, 1876/17357, BDM.

²⁵⁰ Birth Certificate of Leo James Lawless, 21 March 1878, 1878/7981, BDM.

²⁵¹ Birth Certificate of Thomas Augustine Lawless, 20 June 1880, 1880/9202, BDM.

²⁵² Birth Certificate of Annie Lawless, 2 October 1881, 1881/10997, BDM.

²⁵³ St Francis' Church, Thames, Register of Baptisms 1874-1886, entry for 30 March 1883, Catholic Archives, Auckland; Death Certificate of Daniel Frederick Lawless, 1950/28577, BDM.

Waiorongomai in September 1884,²⁵⁵ as was Florence Cecilia in November 1885;²⁵⁶ they were both baptized at Te Aroha.²⁵⁷ Florence would die aged seven months, after suffering from bronchitis for two weeks.²⁵⁸ On 28 December 1887, a private baptism without any godparents being named was held in Thames for Joseph, who lived for only one day, having been born prematurely.²⁵⁹ Another Joseph, born in March 1890, also prematurely, lived for six hours before dying of 'exhaustion'.²⁶⁰ His twin sister, Mary, lived for 24 hours before dying from the same cause.²⁶¹ Their names were another indication of their parents' strong Catholic faith.

In 1895, his eldest daughter, Ellen, commonly known as Nellie, was severely burnt on the legs and body.

It appears that she was getting dinner ready, and when near the fire, her dress by some means caught fire, and she was soon enveloped in flames. She immediately rushed outside, and threw herself in a pool of mud, and in this was extinguished the fire. She was, however, badly burned, in addition to receiving a great shock.

A doctor took 'all possible means' to 'alleviate the pain'.²⁶² Two days later, she was 'recovering, and quite out of danger'.²⁶³ This accident must have been especially upsetting for Lawless because his wife had died from a

²⁵⁴ St Francis' Church Thames, Register of Baptisms 1874-1886, entries for births on 21 March 1878, 21 June 1880, 2 October 1881, 30 March 1883, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

²⁵⁵ Birth Certificate of Charles Edward Lawless, 30 September 1884, 1884/6199, BDM.

²⁵⁶ Birth Certificate of Florence Sicilia Lawless, 19 November 1885, 1885/17935, BDM.

²⁵⁷ St Joseph's Church Te Aroha, Register of Baptisms 1884-1949, nos. 8, 23, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

²⁵⁸ Death Certificate of Florence Cecilia Lawless, 30 June 1886, 1886/6063, BDM.

²⁵⁹ St Francis' Church Thames, Register of Baptisms 1885>, no. 130, Catholic Archives, Auckland; Birth Certificate of Joseph Lawless, 28 December 1887, 1887/9170; Death Certificate of Joseph Lawless, 29 December 1887, 1887/4889, BDM.

²⁶⁰ Birth Certificate of Joseph Lawless, 12 March 1890, 1890/5798; Death Certificate of Joseph Lawless, 12 March 1890, 1890/332, BDM.

²⁶¹ Birth Certificate of Mary Lawless, 12 March 1890, 1890/5799; Death Certificate of Mary Lawless, 13 March 1890, 1890/333, BDM.

²⁶² *Thames Advertiser*. 25 July 1895, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 July 1895, p. 28..

²⁶³ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 July 1895, p. 2.

similar one three and a half years earlier.²⁶⁴ Two years later, Ellen married a builder, 'a capital fellow in every respect', by whom she had four children before his sudden death in 1901.²⁶⁵

Her last years saddened by the deaths of her last three babies, Catherine had died in December 1891, aged 39, after being accidentally burnt through her clothes catching fire, followed by a sudden drop in blood pressure.²⁶⁶ 'The skirts of her dress caught at a fire while she was working in the yard, and though she tried hard to put out the flame she unhappily did not succeed'. After neighbours saved her, a doctor discovered bad burns, especially on the legs, back, and shoulders, but at first no serious consequences were anticipated from this 'painful experience'.²⁶⁷ Then, on the following day, she died in hospital from shock.²⁶⁸ At her inquest, Lawless said that, when wearing a light print dress, she had been hanging a sheet and table cloth on a line near a small fire. A strong wind had been blowing, and once her dress caught fire she ran into the house; finding nobody there to help her, she ran out the side gate towards Tararu Road 'and ran against the wind her clothes still on fire, until she met a man'. Lawless arrived shortly afterwards, and took her home. The man she encountered stated that he had heard her screams and seen her coming towards him, calling for water. 'I took off my vest and tried to beat out the flames as well as I could, she kept running on, at last I forced her to the ground I obtained a blanket from one of the neighbours and wrapped it round her & got some water & soaked the blanket, & put out the fire'.²⁶⁹ Her funeral was 'very largely attended' by 'all classes of the community', which testified 'to the respect in which the deceased was held'.²⁷⁰

THE SECOND MRS LAWLESS

Lawless was faced with having to support his family but also raise six children aged, at the time of their mother's unexpected and tragic death,

²⁶⁴ Death Certificate of Catherine Lawless, 4 December 1891, 1891/4943, BDM.

²⁶⁵ Marriage Certificate of Ellen Lawless, 16 June 1897, 1897/550; Death Certificate of John MacDonnell, 1901/6056, BDM; *Observer*, 2 November 1901, p. 5.

²⁶⁶ Death Certificate of Catherine Lawless, 4 December 1891, 1891/4943, BDM.

²⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 December 1891, p. 2.

²⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 December 1891, p. 2.

²⁶⁹ Inquest on Catherine Lawless, Justice Department, J 46 COR, 1891/763, ANZ-W.

²⁷⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 December 1891, p. 2.

between seven and 15.²⁷¹ One traditional solution was to seek another wife. Five and a half years later, in July 1896, at the age of 44 he married Margaret Doran, aged 40, another Catholic who had been born in Ireland to James, a baker, and Margaret, née Meehan.²⁷² They would not have any children.²⁷³

Margaret assisted her husband conduct his Waihi hotel, the Waihi newspaper recalled in 1919, and was 'well and popularly known'. She had put in the first sheet to be printed by this newspaper.²⁷⁴ After being widowed, much of Lawless' inheritance must have been shared around his children (he did not leave a will to specify who received what), meaning she may have need to work. At first she was licensee of the Palace Hotel at Te Aroha until, in August 1915, taking over the Grand Hotel from John McSweeney,²⁷⁵ which she ran until October 1923.²⁷⁶ The *Te Aroha News* stated that she ran the hotel well until poor health forced her to retire.²⁷⁷ The only time she was in trouble with the law was in 1919, when she was fined for not keeping a wages and overtime book.²⁷⁸

Margaret supported the Liberal Party's views, and in 1899 was one of the nominators of a candidate standing for Ohinemuri as an independent Liberal against the official party candidate.²⁷⁹

Margaret died in Hamilton in 1926, aged 76. She had suffered from 'cardiac insufficiency' for six months before her final heart failure.²⁸⁰ Her will, written two days before her death, named her executrix as her unmarried step-daughter Annie, then a milliner at Matamata. Her estate of £9,952 13s 7d was shared amongst relatives and friends. £150 was given to the St Vincent de Paul Society, £400 to the orphans cared for by the Sisters

²⁷¹ Death Certificate of Catherine Lawless, 4 December 1891, 1891/4943, BDM.

²⁷² Marriage Certificate of Thomas Lawless, 8 July 1896, 1896/3522, BDM.

²⁷³ Death Certificate of Margaret Lawless, 14 September 1926, 1926/3056, BDM.

²⁷⁴ *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, n.d., cited in *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1919, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ See paper on his life.

²⁷⁶ *Observer*, 20 November 1915, p. 23; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Mining Privileges 1894-1910, entry for 3 August 1915, BBAV 11500/2a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1915, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 7 June 1915, p. 2.

²⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1923, p. 1.

²⁷⁸ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1919-1921, entry for 4 April 1919, BCDG 11220/3a, ANZ-A.

²⁷⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 29 November 1899, p. 2.

²⁸⁰ Death Certificate of Margaret Lawless, 14 September 1926, 1926/3065, BDM.

of Mercy, £250 to the Te Aroha priest's building fund for the school and church, and £200 to the Little Sisters of the Poor, whose chaplain was asked to say Masses 'for the repose of the souls of my husband and myself'. Money was left to three step-grandchildren, Annie receiving half the residue.²⁸¹

CONCLUSION

Wherever he settled, Lawless was a prominent member of the community. Although principally a publican, he also had other jobs as need be, for until his final decades he was financially stretched – even publicans could go bankrupt, as he experienced in 1885, when the declining Waiorongomai field means financial ruin. He and his wives were active in the communities' social and sporting life, and he assisted these communities in various formal ways such as being a member of school committees. He was deservedly popular wherever he lived, with nobody seemingly having a bad word to say about him. The one tragedy of his life was the death of his first wife in an accident that was not uncommon at that time.²⁸²

Appendix

Figure 1: Cartoons of Thomas and Margaret Lawless as proprietor and hostess of the Commercial Hotel in Waihi, Observer, 27 April 1901, p. 12.

²⁸¹ Probates, BBAE 1569/19033, ANZ-A.

²⁸² For instance, see Laura Devey's fate in the paper on George Devey and his family.

